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THE DAUGHTER:

OR,

Household Work.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "JOHN HAMPTON'S HOME."

"With Thee let every week begin;
With Thee each day be spent;
For Thee each fleeting hour improved,
Since each by Thee is lent."



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THE DAUGHTER;

OR,

Household Work.

IN a village in the West of England, near the beautiful banks of the Severn, lived a gardener named Finch, an industrious hard-working man. His wife, not less diligent than himself, kept her cottage in excellent order, and taught her children by the force of her own example. Her's was not one of those homes in which confusion, and disorder, and dirt have the upper hand. On the contrary, she resolutely set herself against everything in the shape of untidiness and uncleanness. She was not one to let things go their own way. She looked round her, and took note of the work there was for her to do. She looked before her, and planned how to get through her work to the best advantage. She was not like those, who, when the district-visitors call, have to search through all their drawers, and to make untidy still untidier, before finding the now torn and greasy tract which a fortnight since was lent them in a clean new

cover. Her motto was, "A place for everything, and everything in its place." She did not leave the breakfast-cups to be washed up with the dinner-plates, or take in the fresh milk without cleaning the jug which had been used over-night. There were no scattered crumbs left all day upon her table, there was no gathering of six weeks' smoke upon her chimney-shelf. Go into her cottage when you would, you could always find a chair to sit on; and though she would wipe it down before she asked you to take a seat, it was more out of politeness than because there really was any dust to remove. It is true that she could not get things nice, or keep them nice, without constant rubbing and scrubbing, and sweeping and cleaning. But she found it well worth her while. "It saves a deal of trouble in the end," she used to say, "and a lot of money, too; muddle is just the wastefullest thing that can be."

Mrs. Finch was sparing of her words; but when she did speak, it was in a way which carried some pointed lesson straight to the mark she meant it for. When her eldest boy was idle, she would say to him, "'No pains, no gains;' 'no mill, no meal;' 'no work, no wages.'" Or if he fretted over his books in the evening, she would say, "Come; 'a stout heart and a stiff pull;' 'if you'll like your lesson, it's sure to like you.'" Willy was quite a different boy from his brother Tom,

being of an active turn, always busy, but restlessly flying from one thing to another, and apt to leave both unfinished; "one thing at a time," said his mother; "two hares at once, and you catch neither." Her little girls never forgot how often she told them, "There is a right and a wrong to everything," and how, if they did wrong, she would shake her head, and give them the truthful warning, "Evil deeds make evil days."

It was in such a home, that Clara, the eldest of Mrs. Finch's daughters, spent her childhood. At sixteen years of age, she went into service; and it was not difficult for a girl from such a tidy cottage to find a good place even on first going out. It was as under-housemaid that she went to "The Hall," which a family from abroad had just taken on a short lease. She knew that there would be much for her to learn, which she could not have been taught at home. However, she was of a teachable disposition, and willing to do her best. "Let what you do, be well done," was her mother's parting advice to her.

It was easy to see from Clara's way of setting to work, that she had not been trained to do things by halves. Her mistress, Mrs. Morris, was much pleased with her, and gave several proofs of her approbation. "Well," said Mrs. Finch, on hearing of this, "only mind you keep up to the mark; a new broom always sweeps clean, they say; let your mistress

have to speak just as well of you years hence as she does now." It was a hint given in time, and happily it was a hint not thrown away. Clara persevered in well-doing. There were times when she grew weary of the brush and the duster, and felt inclined to take things too easily; there were times also when her fellow-servants tempted her to waste her moments in idle gossip; but such was the force of early teachings and of early habits, that it was not often she could be charged with negligence.

In Clara's home, however, there had been one thing lacking. Her father and mother were virtuous, but not godly people. They thought themselves religious, because they had their children baptized, sent them to church on fine days, and went there themselves oftener than many of their neighbours. And yet they were living without the fear and love of God in their souls. From a sense of self-respect, and from a desire to stand well in the esteem of people whose good opinion was most worth having, they led an upright, creditable, exemplary life. This was all. No higher motive urged them. No thought of God's all-seeing eye, no wish to do God's righteous will, no thankful sense of God's saving mercy, reigned in their hearts. They taught their children to do what is right; they forgot to teach them that God loves what is right. The children learned to look at duty only as a

thing to be done for their own sakes; they never dreamed that it was a thing to be done for God's sake.

The family who had come to the Hall were truly Christian people. Their's was not a zeal for souls which could forget to begin at home. They remembered that each one of their servants was an immortal being. They found that Clara had no Bible of her own, and they immediately supplied her with one. She saw that they took delight in reading God's holy book, and she was led to follow their example. She read a chapter by herself every evening, and she heard two chapters a day read by her master at family-worship. Every Sunday evening Mrs. Morris had a Bible-class for the younger maid-servants, and this was a privilege in which the under-housemaid had a share. They read the history of Deborah, the faithful nurse, who, after having brought up Rebekah, went with her to her married home, lived to see eleven of her mistress's grandsons, and in a good old age was buried by the family beneath "the oak of weeping." They studied the short account which is given of the "little maid," who told her Syrian mistress about the prophet's power to cure Naaman of his leprosy. They talked together about the damsel, named Rhoda, whose duty it was to answer the door, and who could not open it for gladness when she saw that God had heard the prayers offered by her mistress and her mistress's friends, and

THE DAUGHTER;

had saved the apostle Peter from prison and from death.

It was a great surprise to Clara, when she saw how truthfully the Bible speaks about household-work, and how it describes a woman lighting her candle, and sweeping her house, and seeking diligently for a lost piece of money. When she came to read those words, "I will wipe Jerusalem, as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down," she saw that God does not disdain to notice the way in which we perform even the commonest duties of our every-day life. And when she read at another time the saying of Jesus, "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness," she saw that for our work to be half-done, and done on the surface only, can no more be pleasing to God than it is to man.

Very slowly, but very steadily, the thought dawned upon her mind, till it grew into a strong and clear conviction, that she had been living without God in this world of His. She began to feel that she ought to have loved Him, ought to have served Him, ought to have glorified Him, but that she had not loved Him, nor served Him, nor glorified Him, nor even cared to think about Him. The more she pondered this, the more she felt ashamed; with shame came sorrow; and with her sorrow there also came fear. She had

offended God, had sinned against Him, had deserved His anger. She longed to know what she must do to find forgiveness. She remembered one of her mother's favourite sayings, "Sorrow pays no debt." She took these words in a higher sense, and applied them to her soul. She saw that her own tears could never wash away her guilt, and that her own penitence could never purchase pardon. How was her debt to be paid? how was her sin to be blotted out? She spoke to one of her fellow-servants, whom she knew to be a Christian, and asked her; "What must I do?" Martha Stirling told her of One who died that we might live, and who rose again from the dead that we might live with Him in glory. The word was received with faith. Faith worked by love. And love asked the question, "What can I do for Him who has done so much for me?"

Clara learned to live a new life. Her outward duties, indeed, were the same as ever. She had still the beds to make, the grates to clean, the breakfast-china to wash, and so on. Her daily task was in no way different from what it had always been. The change was not in her work, but in herself. The spirit in which she did it, was new; and her motives for doing it well, were likewise new.

It was not all at once, indeed, that she came to think rightly about such matters. When she had entered on the pilgrimage toward

heaven, she could not go far without meeting difficulties of one kind and another. But just as "Christian" and "Hopeful" used to cheer and strengthen each other by words of good counsel, so she and Martha Stirling often talked together, and the younger was helped on by the friendly advice of the elder. Accordingly when Clara was tempted at one time to hurry through her work in order to get more time for reading and prayer, Martha saw her danger and warned her of it. "Look," she said, "at this verse, 'I hate robbery for burnt-offering.'"

"What of that?" asked Clara; "I don't see what it means."

"I think it may help to teach us that God does not wish us to bring Him our offerings of prayer and praise when we ought to be serving Him in some other way. You and I have to do our duty by our master and mistress. If we take their time for anything else, (no matter how well we spend it,) it is like robbing them; and God doesn't call us to do that."

"I never saw it so, before; but I believe you're right. Only don't you think, Martha, that I ought to have more time to myself, if ever my soul is to prosper?"

"You always have a good hour or two of an evening, except when there's company. Many a poor woman with a family about her would be glad to have as much quiet time as

you and I can get. What would you do, if you had to toil from early morning to late at night, and had never a moment to call your own?"

"I should be in a poor way, indeed! I could neither 'get good' nor 'do good,' I'm sure."

"Yet there are many of God's children in that case; and do you think He puts them where they really *cannot* serve Him?"

"No, I suppose not. But I don't see how such people can manage at all."

"They certainly could not on your plan, Clara. But is there not such a thing as serving God with our heart all the time our hands are busy?"

"How? I don't think I know exactly what you mean?"

"I suppose you've heard the story of Mary, the minister's servant, and how she explained the text, 'Pray without ceasing.'"

"No, I never heard it; at least, not that I know of."

"The more I have to do, the more I can pray.' 'Indeed!' said her master; 'well, do tell me how that is, for most people would say it is just the opposite with them.' 'In this way, Sir,' says she; 'when I open my eyes in the morning, I ask God to open the eyes of my understanding; when I'm dressing, I pray to be clothed with the robe of righteousness and the garments of salvation; when I wash, I pray for the washing of regeneration;

when I light the fire, I ask that the Holy Spirit may kindle in my heart a flame of love to the Saviour; when I sweep the room, I ask to have my heart cleansed from all sin; when I take my meals, I pray that my soul may be fed with the bread of life, and the water of life, and the milk of the word, and the strong meat, and the hidden manna; when I'm looking after the children, I pray that I may live as a child of God should; when I'm trimming the lamp, I pray that I may have the oil of grace in the vessel of my soul; and so everything I do all day long gives me somewhat to pray about."

"And is that your way, Martha?"

"Yes; my aunt who had the bringing of me up, used to try and get me into the way of finding texts about a house, and most of the things in a house, so that I might easily remember them when I began putting my hand to house-work. And I'm sure I've found it of great use to me. It seems to make all my duties like so many links to heaven, instead of their being like a strong chain to drag me down to earth."

"But," said Clara, "wouldn't such a plan keep one too much to the same thoughts over and over again? our duties are one day so much like another day, that it seems to me we should be going just backwards and forwards."

"Well, it may be so; at least, in some degree. But then, after all, most blessings

for the soul are things we need day by day, and therefore we can't ask for them too often. Besides, we needn't always go over the same ground exactly. Every day brings its own changes; it's seldom there isn't something extra to do; so that if we are only quick in getting hold of such thoughts, we can often find new ones. For instance, if Jane were to go and sweep away that cobweb which she has left in yonder corner, what could it remind her of?"

"I don't know," answered Clara, who was too much in earnest to be ashamed of those three honest words.

"Can't you think of anything? why, there's a text in Job, which speaks of the hypocrite's hope being like 'a spider's web!' That might set one thinking how very different is the hope of the Christian, which maketh not ashamed."

"To be sure! so it might."

"And then," added Martha, "don't you remember how you found a jug empty this morning which you expected to find full of water, and how you went to the pump where you were sure of finding plenty? might not that remind you that earthly friends may fail us, but we have an unfailing Friend above, for 'when all created streams are dried, His fulness is the same!'"

"I wish I had thought of that at the time, and then I shouldn't have felt so vexed at the trouble of having to fill the jug! But I'm

afraid I shall never get into the way of thinking such thoughts for myself."

"There's a great deal in being in the habit of it. I once heard of a good man—Henry Martyn, the missionary—who found it so easy, that he used to say, 'A single green leaf might be good company for him, for it brought his Father near, and he could talk with God.' And then the best of it is, that we can go on with such thoughts, without ever being hindered in our work. I've sometimes been so glad to think that we can have a great many spiritual thoughts, when we've very little time for spiritual duties, such as praying and the like."

"But can we do our work as well? Mother used always to tell me that we can't do two things at once to do either of them as we ought."

"That depends on what sort of things they are, I should say. When our work is new to us, or when it is of a kind that wants close thinking about, then of course it needs that we give our full mind to it. But when you and I are about our every-day work, we don't find it takes much thinking of, now that we're used to it. It seems to go like clock-work almost, and we're sure to be thinking all the while about other things. Now my belief is, that the better things we think about, the better our work is likely to be done. It's only thinking of folly and nonsense that ever

spoils our work. Thoughts of God and of good things won't make us careless."

Clara Finch tried to carry out the idea her friend had given her. Some days she succeeded better, and some days worse. She could remember the things which Martha had told her of, but she was troubled at not being able to find any such emblems or make any new trains of thought for herself. She began to be quite down-hearted, especially at a time when Martha had gone up to London for a fortnight's holiday.

Mrs. Morris saw that there was something on Clara's mind, and had a talk with her. On learning what was the matter, she said, "Ah! I see how it is. You have been making a fetter for yourself of what Martha finds to be like a pair of wings to her. But you must remember, Clara, that we are not all made alike; and the very thing which is a great help to one, may not be so to another. Martha has a lively fancy, and takes up such thoughts readily. If you were of the same turn of mind, you would find it easy. Her plan is not a bad one, and you will do well to try it, because (by trying it) you may at length come to find it easy and helpful; but take care that you look upon it only as a *plan*, and not as a *rule*. Do not put upon yourself a burden which God has not laid upon you."

"But," said Clara, "I'm afraid the fault is in my not being heavenly-minded enough."

“None of us,” replied Mrs. Morris, “are as heavenly-minded as we might be, and ought to be, and should seek to be; but if you really wish to have frequent thoughts of God, if you truly desire that your whole life should be a walking with God, it will be the fixed purpose of your soul to honour Him in *every* thing. He has laid down no rule as to the number of times we are to think of Him each day, or the number of things which are to remind us of Him. His one rule on this matter is, ‘Give Me thy heart.’ If our hearts are His, we shall often be thinking of Him in one way or other. Did you ever set yourself to take note of the number of times you think of your father or your mother? No, your love to them is always in your heart; you think of them without ever setting yourself to do so; you make no task of remembering them; it often seems to you as if their words were sounding in your ears; and I am sure that your soul leaps with fond affection when anything reminds you of home. Just so with Christians. They can at all times say, ‘The desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee.’ Their love to God their heavenly Father is like a deep stream, sometimes rushing on vehemently, and at other times going on its way very gently, but always flowing on toward the ocean from which it sprang, and always carrying with it a refreshing influence that makes fruit abound to the glory and praise of God. You see, then,

Clàra, what you have to concern yourself about is simply the state of your heart toward God. If you do not love Him, all the plans in the world for thinking of Him may bring you no nearer the mark. If you do love Him, your heart will be sure to find its own way of going out after Him. The best thing for you to attend to, is this; make it your wish and intention to let your every duty be done *to* God and *for* God. Say to yourself, ‘However mean, however trifling this or that duty may be in itself, yet I will do it as the thing which He has appointed for me to do; for His sake I will do it well; for His sake I will do it quickly; for His sake I will do it cheerfully.’ In this way you will serve Him *in* your work and *by* your work, even if you can find no good and holy lesson (as Martha does) from the work itself. In this way you will wait upon God all the day through; and blessed will such days be! I dare say you know that beautiful hymn which begins,—

“Thrice happy souls, who, born from heaven,
While yet they sojourn here,
Thus all their days with God begin,
And spend them in His fear.

“Midst hourly cares may love present
Its incense to Thy throne;
And while the world our hands employs,
Our hearts be Thine alone.

“As sanctified to noblest ends,
Be each refreshment sought;
And by each various providence
Some wise instruction brought.

THE DAUGHTER.

“ When to laborious duties call’d,
Or by temptations tried,
We’ll seek the shelter of Thy wings,
And in Thy strength confide.

“ As different scenes of life arise,
Our grateful hearts would be
With Thee amidst the social band,
In solitude with Thee.

Always with God, and God always with us!
That is the secret of a happy life.”

Clara looked up with a thankful smile. Her difficulty was gone. She felt that it would lighten every task, and sweeten every toil, to remember that she was working the work which God had given her to do. She was of a loving spirit; she had given the love of her heart to Him who had first loved her; and now she saw how even *her* whole life might be a life of service to Him. She was filled with wonder and with joy at the thought that He would accept this at her hands. She saw good reason to say, “ Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven,” and yet humbleth Himself still more to behold the things that are “ in the earth.”

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